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## *Surprised by Joy*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by Canon George Maxwell**

It's summer, and it's hot.

I retreated with friends to a local neighborhood pool last week looking for a break.

The pool was full of children, clad in sun shirts and swim goggles. They were bobbing up and down, splashing each other, and laughing in that carefree way that tends to make the rest of us feel the weight of our grown-up thoughts.

I forgot myself for a moment.

I forgot about the ongoing restructuring of our staff functions. I forgot about the upcoming seminar that I'm supposed to be planning. I forgot about the parishioner I had just visited in the hospital who wasn't going to get any better.

Then, a young girl attracted my attention.

She was standing at the top of a ramp leading into the pool, calling to a friend who was already in the water. Her friend turned and, without missing a beat, the young girl cocked her head, raised her arm, and started to lip sync the words of the pop song that was playing over the loud speakers.

She dramatically dropped her arm into a shoulder shimmy and, with what appeared to be a practiced confidence, she dance walked her way down the ramp and into the water.

I was not the only one paying attention, as is turned out. I recognized my smile on the faces of other adults sitting around the pool. And, it wasn't long before the other kids were busting moves of their own.

It all felt like one of those moments C. S. Lewis called "stabs of joy."

In his autobiography, which is titled *Surprised by Joy*, the great twentieth century writer and apologist talks about joy as a glimpse of an eternal goodness that is beyond words.

Stabs of joy are like signposts that mark the way for those of us who would otherwise be lost in the woods. As we learn the way, Lewis says, we find that we don't need them and sometimes forget even to notice that they are there.

I'm not one to argue with C. S. Lewis, but I kind of like the signposts!

I kind of like the reminders of God's presence in the world.

I don't think that it's all that usual for us to be walking along and realize that we aren't on the path that we thought we had taken.

It's then that it's good to remember where to look for those signposts.

I hope that your summer is full of “stabs of joy,” and that you remember just where to look for them!

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